

Review article

Civic education: key aspects of José Martí's thinking



Formación ciudadana: aspectos claves del pensamiento de José Martí

Educação cívica: aspectos-chave do pensamento de José Martí

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ABSTRACT

This work was carried out from the perspective of the Philosophy of Education. Its starting point was the current relevance of civic education and the value of observing the dialectic between present and past within it. Therefore, its core lies in the links between civic education and the thought of José Martí, a topic that has received little attention, especially considering one of the essential characteristics of his ideology: its unified and integrative nature. Some of its characteristics are presented: its foundation rests on the ideas of the homeland, nature, and the universe; it is synthesized in the conception of the human being and, from this, is decisive in his reflections on the citizen, the republic, and education, as well as in the integration of education with instruction and human development, because Martí's ultimate goal is to form the human being as a whole and, therefore, as a citizen, linked to society, the State, and legal norms, but also to culture. Thus, the idea is defended that the unitary and integrative nature of Martí's thought is the basis of the relationship between his ideas and civic education, and the scientific objective was to argue that this nature is the basis of the relationship between Martí's thought and civic education. Among the methods used are the historical-logical method (to address historical conditions and thematic coherence) and comparison (of ideas and texts).

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Keywords: citizen; education; civic education; José Martí's thought; human being.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo se realizó desde la perspectiva de la Filosofía de la Educación. Su punto de partida fue la actualidad de la formación ciudadana y la valía que en ella tiene la observación de la dialéctica presente-pasado; de aquí que su núcleo son los nexos entre la formación ciudadana y el pensamiento de José Martí, tema poco tratado, sobre todo desde una de las características esenciales de su ideario: el carácter unitario e integrador. De este se exponen algunas características: su cimiento está en las ideas de la patria, la naturaleza y el universo; se sintetiza en la concepción del ser humano y, a partir de esta, es decisivo en sus reflexiones acerca del ciudadano, la república y la educación, así como en la conjugación de esta con la instrucción y la formación humana, porque el fin último martiano es formar al ser humano como un todo y, por tanto, como un ciudadano, ligado a la sociedad, el Estado y las leyes jurídicas, pero también a la cultura. Así, se defiende la idea de que el carácter unitario e integrador del pensamiento de Martí es la base de las relaciones entre sus ideas y la formación ciudadana y se tuvo como objetivo científico argumentar que dicho carácter es la base de la relación entre el pensamiento martiano y la formación ciudadana. Entre los métodos utilizados están el histórico-lógico (para atender las condiciones históricas y la coherencia temática) y la comparación (de ideas y textos).

Palabras clave: ciudadano; educación; formación ciudadana; pensamiento de José Martí; ser humano.

RESUMO

Este trabalho foi realizado a partir da perspectiva da Filosofia da Educação. Seu ponto de partida foi a relevância atual da educação cívica e o valor de observar a dialética entre o presente e o passado dentro dela. Portanto, seu núcleo reside nas ligações entre a educação cívica e o pensamento de José Martí, um tema que tem recebido pouca atenção, especialmente considerando uma das características essenciais de sua ideologia: seu caráter unitário e integrador. Algumas de suas características são apresentadas: seu fundamento reside nas ideias de pátria, natureza e universo; sintetiza-se na concepção do ser humano e, a partir disso, é decisiva em suas reflexões sobre o

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cidadão, a república e a educação, bem como na integração da educação com a instrução e o desenvolvimento humano, porque o objetivo final de Martí é formar o ser humano em sua totalidade e, portanto, como cidadão, vinculado à sociedade, ao Estado e às normas jurídicas, mas também à cultura. Assim, defende-se a ideia de que a natureza unitária e integradora do pensamento de Martí é a base da relação entre suas ideias e a educação cívica, e o objetivo científico foi argumentar que essa natureza é o fundamento da relação entre o pensamento de Martí e a educação cívica. Entre os métodos utilizados estão o método histórico-lógico (para considerar as condições históricas e a coerência temática) e a comparação (de ideias e textos).

Palavras-chave: cidadão; educação; educação cívica; pensamento de José Martí; ser humano.

INTRODUCTION

Civic education is of growing and significant importance, particularly in the academic sphere. This stems from society's expectation that students, regardless of their grade level, possess the knowledge and maturity to act responsibly and actively in society. However, these efforts alone are no longer sufficient. It is essential that students, both boys and girls, become increasingly inclusive and prepared to seek and find solutions to emerging problems, not only within their own communities and contexts, but also beyond, anywhere in the world.

The aforementioned situation demands a teaching and educational approach that, while prioritizing practical experiences, should not relegate the updating and strengthening of the theoretical component to secondary levels. These objectives require, as Ascorra *et al.* (2025) asserts, a specific work to encourage dialogues with a critical spirit and for students to focus their attention on the solution of problems of these times, such as life in common, public life, diversity and inclusion in society and culture, which does not mean that classic topics are neglected, which must be tempered to the conditions of today, such as human rights and democracy.

When discussing civic education, it is important to point out that the concept of citizen has long been viewed in direct relation to politics and the law; consequently, this education has been limited to these areas. However, while acknowledging the essential and determining value of both, it is necessary to understand that contemporary society and culture, with their characteristic complexity and diversity, demand that citizens also be educated in other areas, complementing the traditional

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ones. For example, today there is a growing emphasis on fostering a more inclusive spirit in citizens (Sanahuja-Ribes *et al.*, 2025), who respectfully relate to sexual and gender diversity (Lazo, 2025) and who, in addition to having an active role in society, make decisions based on in-depth and reliable information, as well as develop a productive life (Brooks & Villacís, 2023). None of this is achieved solely through legal decrees or state provisions, nor even through rigorous knowledge of both; educational work is essential.

Today's global society is increasingly complex; it is marked by rampant globalization, which tends to erase the past, and by the ever-expanding and varied use of technology, which is often presented as the solution to all problems. In this situation, every nation must strengthen its study of history; when it is taught as a subject, as García-Fernández (2025) points out, it must be adapted to current conditions. This task includes re-examining patriotic thought, where, in the case of Cuba, José Martí shines brightly. Returning to the 19th century is not about finding solutions to the problems of the 21st century, but about finding reflections and recommendations that remain relevant, that can illuminate and guide us.

Presented in a substantial body of work written in prose and verse, comprising essays, articles, chronicles, poems, and letters, the thought of José Martí (1853-1895) stands out for its enduring relevance and timeliness, evident not only in the explicit but also in the implicit, and not only in the affirmations and negations but also in the manner in which he expressed them and the methods he employed. Such greatness is possible, to a large extent, because Nothing of his time escaped his attention, and thus he became a man of his time; but also because he was able to transcend it, both with his gaze fixed on the future, and with reasoning valid for later times, which is why it can be believed that he even dealt with topics typical of times after his life, a possible opinion regarding all thinkers of complex mind and long-range perception.

Such qualities allow that in the ideas of the most universal Cuban there are aspects related to the civic education that must be carried out in the times we live in, above all in the considerations about the citizen and the republic desired by him, as well as those concerning moral values and education.

Closely related to the above are the texts that make up * *La Edad de Oro* * (Martí, 1975i), where the profound reflections and aphorisms he expresses regarding moral values in childhood and their significance for adult social life might lead one to think that his conception of civic education is condensed within them. Thinking this way is not an error in the strict sense of the word, since these

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matters are inherent to his work; however, it is an epistemological reductionism. While it is true that such key elements for civic education are present in the aforementioned texts, it is also true that they can be found in several of his other writings, although often implicitly, occasionally, or in relation to specific issues. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that Martí did not dedicate direct attention to the formative process, understood from a pedagogical perspective. Therefore, the aforementioned concept does not exist in his thinking, which does not prevent his reflections from containing valuable considerations and suggestions for civic education.

The above position does not preclude agreeing with the opinion of the authors González-Quintero and Gómez-Rodríguez (2022) that the formative work of reference in Cuban educational institutions is based on the ideas of Martí, particularly those he develops regarding the citizen, the homeland and education centered on the moral values that should characterize the republic he aspires to build; rather, in the present work such criteria are deepened and established among them and other essential characteristics of his thought.

Based on the above, and from the perspective of the Philosophy of Education, this study is developed with the following methodological characteristics: scientific problem: the relationship between the ideas of José Martí and civic education; scientific objective: to argue that the unitary and integrative character is the basis of the relationship between the thought of José Martí and civic education; idea that is defended: the unitary and integrative character of the thought of José Martí is the basis of the relationships between his ideas and civic education; methodology: critical-comparative study of texts.

The work is composed of the following sections: The unified and integrative nature of José Martí's thought; The citizen, the republic, and civic education in Martí's ideas; Martí: education in connection with civic education. A varied and current bibliography was used for its preparation, mostly from the last five years, although the writings of José Martí are particularly noteworthy.

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DEVELOPMENT

The category of civic education is the combination of two categories: education and citizen, and each one has various theories behind it; however, it is possible to arrive at a clarification, which should not be closed to diversity or controversy.

Words always lead somewhere, but their origin is what guides us most. It is valuable to begin any reflection with the meanings of a word, especially when it is also a category, because it is taken into account in the fields of philosophy or science.

The word "formation" has, among others, the following meanings: the action and effect of shaping or forming; a set of similar characteristics; a specific order. It is from this last meaning that it is used to refer to military troops, and it can be assumed that it is used with this same sense to allude to the lines of students who are about to enter the classrooms to begin their studies, although in the academic sphere it carries another meaning: the pedagogical one, whose cardinal purpose is the creation and development of superior qualities in students.

With the sense of creating and developing, the word "training" has become a fundamental category in pedagogy, which, by its very nature, is intrinsically linked to another essential category in this field: education. The connections between the two are so strong that some specialists consider them synonymous and use them interchangeably, while others establish relationships of hierarchy, inclusion, and specialization between them. This can be seen, for example, when referring to a system or level, where the word "education" is used because it is considered broader than the term "training." The distinction between the two has given rise to a considerable number of arguments, which are beyond the scope of this work.

Based on the above and the experience gained from over forty years of university teaching, it can be stated that the distinction between education and training is a matter of intentionality. The use of the term "education" suggests that it is employed more to refer to ideas and actions aimed at shaping human beings, in whom certain characteristics are formed; while the term "training" usually refers to the creation within them of something new and superior, to their transformation into something specific that they are not: professors, doctors, patriots, honest individuals, professionals, citizens, in whom, at the same time, existing qualities are shaped. In shaping, one forms; in training, one shapes. Neither is static nor finite; rather, both involve continuous development.

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The word "citizen" originated in Rome and comes from the Latin word "*civitas*," which referred to people who lived in cities. In Spanish, it retains a meaning close to the original, as it also refers to someone who is a native or inhabitant of a city. From this primary meaning, through a process of transformation and under the influence of historical events such as the French Revolution of 1789, it became associated with the rights and duties of those who belong to a state.

In Antiquity, there were allusions to what is now understood as citizenship, such as Aristotle's consideration of participation in government; that is, the exercise of public power. Cicero (106-43 BCE) reinforced this idea by maintaining that such power is a public matter, thus implying conscious and voluntary participation in political life, as well as commitment to it. However, Greek and Roman political positions were entirely exclusionary. An inclusive approach emerged with Emperor Caracalla (188-217 CE), who in 212 CE recognized all inhabitants of the Empire as citizens and issued an edict legalizing his decision. This explains why it has become common to call someone a citizen if they are considered an active member of a state, within whose framework they have rights and duties; therefore, the word is generally limited to the relationship of the individual with the political system.

Citizens are part of a society, as well as a political power and a political-legal order that prevails within it. Their status is governed by the political regime in which they participate; hence the fundamental importance of its character, principles, and functions, and its specificities, determined by its social foundations, essential norms, operational purposes, the ideological and cultural program that inspires it, the values it promotes and defends, and its internal and external context. Two other defining components of the regime are also crucial: political participation and political actors; their specific qualities, the nature of their relationships with the community to which they belong, their shared interests, and other relevant aspects.

Today, the concept of citizenship must be as broad and inclusive as possible; along with participation and belonging to a community, it must include other basic characteristics, such as an inclusive spirit and openness to diversity. From this foundation, greater attention must be paid to attitude, since participation is an alternative where both rational and emotional factors come into play; thus, it is a disposition not only toward the government and those in power, but also toward other citizens and oneself.

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The condition of being a citizen involves the formation of patterns of behavior, interaction and participation in society, not only in political terms, but also in terms of living conditions, from which the active social character of each person is formed, encompassing all the activities of the country.

When it's talked about civic education, it's emphasized the intention to create something that doesn't yet exist: a citizen or the characteristics that define them. The act of creation cannot be seen solely in what emerges for the first time; it also lies in the development of what already exists, since development creates new qualities, which may or may not be superior to those that already exist.

The use of both categories has led some authors to speak of civic education (Oyarce, 2024; Sanahuja-Ribes *et al.*, 2025) when, clearly, the ideas they develop fall within the content typically addressed under the category of civic education. There are also specialists who view civic education as part of citizenship education and thus aim to "educate for citizenship, understanding it as the formation of the individual as a well-rounded citizen" (Gómez *et al.*, 2022, p. 368). This diversity of criteria has given rise to a heterogeneous theoretical framework, conducive to scientific debate. In this context, it was necessary to arrive at a specific definition to provide theoretical support for this work.

Civic education is a system of ideas and actions that society deploys through its components and at various levels, aimed at having the type of citizen that is suited to the prevailing political, legal, and economic systems, as well as the corresponding ethics and morals, which include the procedures and ways to maintain it and guide it towards the ideal that sustains and drives it.

In the school setting, civic education can be a subject in itself or integrated across the curriculum. In both cases, it is usually viewed as a field of knowledge. When it is a standalone subject, its content is used for instruction, and therefore, attention is paid to concepts, procedures, and changes in students' attitudes. When it is integrated across the curriculum, the aim is to incorporate the objectives of civic education into those of other subjects. This carries the risk that the teacher's attention will focus solely on their own area of expertise. As Baute *et al.* (2023) point out, there are still teachers "with traditional teaching styles and methods, rigid theoretical conceptions, and conservative approaches" (p. 9), who do not take the integration of civic education into their classes seriously because they do not value it appropriately and only think about their own subject area.

Civic education is not only a rational matter, it is also affective. Values must be addressed by combining reason and feelings, because they are fundamental to civic behavior, particularly for

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regulating "coexistence and democratic participation" (Chacón, 2023, p. 3), so that students become the citizens that society requires.

Civic education, and not only within the academic sphere, is a field of knowledge, and it is transdisciplinary. The first of these characteristics stems from the existence of its own content, which structures its objectives, approaches, and methods. Its transdisciplinary nature arises from the involvement of politics, law, philosophy, history, and economics, at a level of integration that generally makes it difficult to establish boundaries between them. Nevertheless, interdisciplinary relationships are possible, either with other specialties or among those mentioned, depending on the topics to be addressed; for example, a new event or a recent philosophical explanation that alters the way it's perceived an issue.

The work of educating citizens in the academic context must correspond, as Baute and García (2022) point out, to the context, the prevailing system, and the economic, political, and social situation of the country, not only to understand them, but above all to improve them, to make them more humane. This can take place through teaching content focused on society, but also through participation in the functions of the institution, as well as in the relationships between the institution and the community. For example, in Chile, the objectives include encouraging critical thinking about society, knowledge of the country's political institutions, human rights, and social and cultural diversity, along with participation in public affairs, the promotion of democratic life, transparency, tolerance, and pluralism, all of which are intended to be included in the curricula and embedded in school life (Salazar *et al.*, 2021). Theoretical knowledge about the State is not enough, as Mayorga (2024) emphasizes, since it is essential to develop "skills and attitudes for life in society" (p. 117).

In all cases, and taking into account the specificities of the school level, it is of great importance that the teaching staff, and also the non-teaching staff, bear in mind that in the school the basic and essential task is to form human beings and not only future professionals; at the same time, that to the same extent they are being formed as citizens.

Civic education must always consider the need to respond to the demands of society and the specific socio-historical context. The implementation of this educational process in any school should be integrative. It must combine three perspectives: the perspective of the process itself—what it consists of and how to carry it out; the perspective of the student—their specific characteristics,

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including generational traits; and the perspective of the results, which focuses on the intended learning outcomes.

The first and last of the aforementioned perspectives are fundamentally linked, converging in their objectives and values. Among the latter, moral and political values stand out; the most common of these are responsibility, solidarity, and social participation. This last point, as Rivera and Sánchez (2022) note, includes identification with the community and respect for coexistence, which are of paramount social and cultural importance.

Due to a narrow epistemological perspective, civic education is sometimes associated with knowledge of the state and its laws, and with sociopolitical activism. In such circumstances, it is possible to believe that the objectives of the educational process are known, that they remain the same over time, and therefore unnecessary to revisit. However, this overlooks the fact that society and the state are not static; their structure, purpose, and the mechanisms for achieving them change. Furthermore, the educational process can be modified through the use of different instruments, methods, and procedures.

Motivating increased participation in shaping society's future is a fundamental goal of civic education, because it encourages people to become involved in their community and feel responsible for it. To achieve this level of engagement, real opportunities for decision-making must exist; it is not enough to be a mere spectator or simply another participant. People need to feel they are an important part of society and realize that they can and should contribute to its transformation and improvement. This task is linked to confronting a growing trend in today's world, one that already worries many experts: indifference. Equally important is fostering practical awareness: not only suffering from inhumane acts and attitudes, but also fighting against the causes of suffering and reversing the situation.

When discussing civic education, one must consider not only the relationship with the political system, but also the systematic socialization process focused on the purpose of enabling each person to become a citizen in the broadest sense and to become aware of their condition; that is, to become a leading actor in society, for which it is essential that real opportunities exist, coupled with the recognition that in contemporary society the plurality of identities, diversity and otherness are gaining strength, seen today as valuable characteristics of democracy.

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From the preceding reflections, the importance of the pedagogical sphere in the formation of a citizen becomes clear. It is essential to remember that it must be cultivated a specific kind of citizen, which encompasses not only belonging, participation, inclusion, and attitude, but also decision-making; that is, the capacity to make decisions and the opportunity to do so. All of this requires instilling values and forming convictions, taking into account individual characteristics and, above all, the nature of educational practice, which today is moving towards flexibility based on diversity and the ever-increasing range of choices. Hence the emphasis that must be placed on the ethical component of this formation and on the value that the formative power of the family environment holds for it.

Citizen formation is a process of rupture, continuity, and improvement between generations; its precise definition depends on the skill and wisdom of those leading the formation process. This task requires attention to several fundamental aspects, including the following: citizens have specific characteristics in each historical period; individuals and society always strive for well-being; respect must be strengthened in every sense, and dialogue must be fostered; alongside addressing the demands of the present and the future, it is wise to draw upon the valuable lessons of the past, adapting them logically and carefully to current conditions and trends.

Based on the latter aspect, the thinking of José Martí is studied within the framework of civic education.

Unitary and integrative character of José Martí's thought

A characteristic that runs through and underpins José Martí's thought is its unitary and integrative nature. This is evident not only because he always expresses, in one way or another, a tendency to unify and integrate forces, interests, and actions, but also because his ideas form a unity in themselves, as does his theoretical foundation composed of three pillars: the homeland, nature, and the universe, where this unifying character is most prominent.

The homeland began to play a fundamental role very early in Martí's life. From it, he developed a broad, complex, and, at the same time, precise conception, one that combined reason, feelings, and imagination. From the very beginning, he directed it toward higher levels of realization, driven by transformative aspirations, the center and principle of which was independence. It constituted a framework encompassing society, culture, and history, through which, and with which, politics, legal systems, and morality, as well as economics, art, science, and education, played a prominent role.

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Equally significant was the presence of the natural environment: the fauna, flora, topography, and rivers.

Everything related to the homeland is precious to José Martí. There are few passages in his thought detached from it, due not only to his patriotic ties with Cuba, but also to those he has with that great territorial expanse he calls Our America, for which he wants the second independence, which, according to González-Zúñiga (2021), is the "constant process of cultural independence for the Hispanic American peoples" (p. 4).

Martí's aspiration for the homeland in all its senses is deeply rooted in decolonialism (Vázquez, 2023) and anti-imperialism (Pacheco, 2023), and includes a radical spiritual change; that is, a transformation of the way of thinking and feeling, to surpass the level achieved as a result of the establishment of nation-states in the region after breaking free from their colonial status. Patriotism frequently comes to the fore in Martí's writings when he speaks of a patriot, highlighting in one way or another the patriot's connection to their birthplace or to the place they have embraced as their homeland.

These references by Martí demonstrate the solidity of his unified and integrative vision, which is enriched, as his ideas mature, by transformative aspirations. These qualities are evident in his early writings published in 1869, among which the verse drama *Abdala* (Martí, 2010a, p. 22) stands out as a reliable example of this vision. It is clear when he affirms that the homeland is not only the material realm—that is, the territory with its riches—but also the spiritual realm, encompassing both love for it and the reasoning surrounding its difficulties and the remedies to overcome them. In his reflections on the homeland, feelings and reason are always, in one way or another, integrated into a unity with the material conditions, whose fundamental importance he recognizes, as well as with its inhabitants—that is, human beings, both individuals and diverse groups, whom he considers the central focus.

The unitary and integrative character of his thought is both grounded in and consolidated by two other basic theoretical cores: nature and the universe. He considers nature to be a dual, unitary, and contradictory whole, defining it as follows: "Everything that exists, in every form—spirits and bodies (...) The mysterious inner world, the marvelous outer world" (Martí, 2010b, pp. 209-210). Regarding the universe, an eloquent example of its referential nature is offered in 1887 when he states: "The Universe is the universe. And the universe, the uni-various, is the varied in the one" (Martí, 2010e,

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p. 152). It is a unity that carries heterogeneity, visible in the diversity of its components and the processes that take place within and through them. Thus, it is possible to understand why he goes so far as to say that "man is the Unified Universe" (Martí, 1975j, p. 261).

These three elements, which he conceives as a unified and integrated whole, are the foundation of his thought, because they are conceptual nuclei of his worldview and because the nuance with which he conceives them colors his reflections, in one way or another, with varying intensity, endowing them with unity and integration. In Martí's considerations, there are no disconnected islands or ships adrift; there are no unjustified or accidental fragmentations or disjunctions. His ideology is a whole, composed of relationships of many kinds and arranged at levels of varying complexity. It is with this quality that he conceives of humankind.

The conception of the human being, which exists, mostly implicitly, in the thought of José Martí, is also unitary and integrative. These qualities are shown not only in that he conceives of humanity as the union of the material and the ideal, but also as a unity of other qualities: the rational and the affective; the measured and the immeasurable; the beautiful and the ugly; good and evil (Martí, 1975j; Martí, 2010b). As an almost constant optimist, he never loses sight of the positive and always aspires to its triumph. In his ideology, faith in the ascending, transformative spirit is continuous, to such a degree that it is intrinsic to his being.

The unifying and integrative force of humankind encompasses both the natural and the artificial, but for Martí, the natural is simultaneously universal, as the essence of human beings, because despite their actions and creativity, they remain integral to nature. In his view, what human beings possess at birth is the capacity to understand, value, and transform, while what they acquire throughout their lives is the sociocultural environment, into which they are inserted at birth and where they develop independently of their will until they become aware of their existence and decide whether to continue accepting, transforming, or eliminating it.

The unitary and integrative conception of the human being is the foundation and essential guide of Martí's understanding of the citizen, the republic and education: components of his thought that have a direct relationship with civic education.

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The citizen, the republic, and civic education in Martí's ideas

The line of thought in José Martí that most strongly connects him to civic education is found in his reflections on the citizen and their ties to the republic, beginning with the fundamental and essential role he assigned to the homeland. This role is primarily embodied by Cuba, his immediate homeland, where he was born and spent the first years of his life. His duty to Cuba, to its independence and well-being, is the starting point from which he begins to develop the value he places on sacrifice, first to achieve its independence and, in the process of liberation itself, to build a society centered on freedom, governed by social justice, and characterized by human dignity.

This prominence in Martí's thought can be found in many ways, as he refers to dignity with a marked diversity of expressions, but always from the perspective of its inherent consistency. With it, he refers to the worth, excellence, and shame that every human being possesses. From his writings, it can be inferred that, at the same time, dignity is for him both the esteem for one's own honor and the respect that should be shown to other human beings simply because they are human.

The guiding and central role he assigns to dignity is most clearly revealed in 1891, when he declares it a fundamental good, the basis, principle, and first law of the future Republic, which would have embedded within its core "the Cuban people's devotion to the full dignity of humankind" (Martí, 1975e, p. 270), and would be safeguarded by the habit of working and thinking for oneself, because otherwise, the sacrifices of patriotic men and women, and the republican endeavor itself, would be worthless. On this basis, he goes so far as to say that anything incompatible with human dignity would not survive. Life, with its stubborn force, has proven the truth of this assertion.

Both dignity and freedom, along with social justice, form the foundation and pillars of Martí's concept of citizenship, a concept often implicit in his thought. In this respect, we agree with González-Quintero and Gómez-Rodríguez (2022) and with Pacheco (2022) that social justice constitutes the cornerstone of Martí's revolutionary thought and action.

The importance he gives to these three qualities is not due to whim or chance, but rather to the specific situation of Cuba, and not only Cuba, but the entire greater homeland, with the particularities of each region, as can be seen in his writings dedicated to it or where he addresses related topics. To emphasize this point, in 1894 he sets forth a fundamental tenet of his ideas about the revolution: "Justice, equality of merit, respectful treatment of all people, full equality of rights: that is the

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revolution" (Martí, 1975c, p. 105). It can be added that this same principle underpins his views on the republic and the citizen who would live in it and contribute to its development.

Based on the above, it can be understood that when Martí observes freedom from a political perspective, as Reyes (2021a) points out, he reveals two dimensions: an external one, from which he positions himself regarding the independence and sovereignty of nations, and an internal one, from which he delves into the freedom of the individual with respect to the government and the political system. But what is most interesting is that, although two dimensions can be delineated, they exist in such close relation that they appear integrated, as when he states that the lack of freedom is the result of false republics, that these are only capable of producing lackeys, and that social work is lasting if it corresponds to the spirit of freedom; when it denies, damages, or diminishes it, it fails and perishes.

He sees such conciliation as the result of systematic practice, not something accidental. He calls for its practice as frequently as possible, not just occasionally, nor in matters of the right to choose, be elected, or vote, nor in trivial matters that often confuse people by making them believe they are free because, for example, they can act in the street as if they were in a private place or disturb the neighborhood whenever they wish.

Martí was aware of the arduous and complex work involved in establishing a republican system, especially one with profound democratic aspirations. He thus declared that "republics are not made in a day" (Martí, 1975d, p. 303), just as independence is not achieved automatically. He even asserted that humanity has not yet reached the level of freedom it aspires to because it must overcome indifference, greed, and pride. The unitary and integrative nature of his thought is fully integrated into his conception of a republic, which for him is a unity, a system, with meticulously interlocking components based on the broadest democracy. Its essential condition is the increasing degree of freedom, above all, spiritual freedom. When the human spirit is bound, it creates the necessary forces to break free from everything that hinders or limits it, everything that prevents it from being and moving forward.

On that basis, he asks how it is possible to live in a republic and not be able to say what one thinks, and emphasizes that in that case, citizens have the right and the duty to change the government for a better one. As González (2023) states, Martí envisions a new republic, a new kind, because "it would bring with it not only a form of government opposed to that of the colony, but a social order

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different from that imposed by Spanish power" (p. 110), which would democratize politics, society, and culture in all their dimensions through full equality of rights, for which the establishment of mechanisms for citizen participation was indispensable.

Based on the above, the republic envisioned by Martí has among its principles the following: the full freedom of the individual as an expression of popular sovereignty; broad citizen participation in government affairs; power linked to the interests of all and not of social fragments; and, among others, an autochthonous and original style, a logical result of the country's development, and not a copy of foreign forms.

From the above, it is understandable why Martí saw in the Cuban patriots, both directly and metaphorically, a true struggle for the homeland and for the republic he envisioned for it, formed and governed by citizens of the highest caliber. For this reason, in the early 1880s, he established the principle that every citizen is a soldier and that "he who does not know how to fight is not a citizen" (Martí, 2010c, p. 168), for it was necessary to fight, as in an armed war, against everything that oppressed, humiliated, and limited Cubans; moreover, because when one is a citizen of a free people, one must respect the laws and practice virtue in all circumstances, and this is a continuous struggle.

For Martí, forming citizens was an arduous task. He doesn't expound a conception of civic education in his writings, nor does he express criteria on how to achieve it, but this doesn't prevent him from hinting that for him it was a task requiring time and dedication. Becoming "a citizen of the republic is difficult, and it is necessary to practice it from childhood" (Martí, 1975h, p. 305); it is a goal fraught with obstacles. The path to achieving it is riddled with barriers of various kinds, which were greater because his aspirations for the republic were profound and demanded radical changes, adjustments, and readjustments.

As mentioned, it does not explicitly express considerations about how to form citizens, but it does set forth criteria regarding the characteristics they should possess and the conditions necessary for them to achieve this and develop as citizens. It contains reflections from which it is possible to formulate principles for this formative work, among which the defense of the homeland and the sincere and honest openness that should characterize the republic in Cuba stand out.

Citizen is a category he doesn't use as frequently as man, but it appears in several of his texts, even early ones. He uses it in connection with the government of a country, among which, due to its

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recurrence, Spain and the United States stand out. Its use is almost universally related to matters of politics and law. He associates the status of citizen with having a free voice and vote and participating in public affairs and elections, but also with owning property and maintaining exemplary conduct. He understands voting as a right, but more than that, as a duty that must be fulfilled rigorously and punctually. This position should not be surprising, since for Martí, rights are subordinate to the fulfillment of duty.

He presents the characteristics of a citizen in several ways. One of them is through exemplification based on someone, as when he speaks of General Serafín Sánchez, whom he sees as worthy of the love of Cubans for the courage he has shown in his service, for the dignity with which he lives in exile, because his existence depends on his work, but also for the passion with which he relates to the aspiration of building a republic in Cuba; for this reason he considers him "a good citizen" (Martí, 1975f, p. 445).

Martí's reflections and views on the republic demonstrate an incredible scope for his time and for the future. He frequently makes it clear in his written works that building a republic was the secondary objective driving the war of independence; the primary objective was achieving independence itself. He conceived of the emancipatory struggle as a revolution, guided by the organization he founded for this purpose: the Cuban Revolutionary Party. He envisioned this party as a grassroots republican organization, a catalyst for unity between the two generations of independence fighters—the veterans and the newcomers—and the two forces: those fighting within Cuba and those operating outside. He organized these forces to spread the spirit and methods of the revolution throughout Cuba, but also to unite them and instill in them a spirit conducive to victory. As Manzanares *et al.* (2023) point out, this work aimed to transform the way Cuban revolutionaries thought.

The Martí Party is a patriotic work and the fruit of the patriotism of numerous Cuban emigrants (Pérez, 2021), a work of the people, open, frank, guided by the objective of uniting forces and organizing them in order to achieve the two highest purposes: the independence of the homeland and the construction within it of the republic that it desires: a peaceful and working republic, open to ties with humanity and built "with all and for the good of all" (Martí, 1975a, p. 272), based on the harmonization of Cuban social classes and the "open and sincere balance of all the real forces of the country" (Martí, 1975b, p. 255); although it would have to be supported by a mandate that it expresses without ambiguity, that "with the oppressed it had to make common cause" (Martí, 1975g, p. 19). Thus, the republic should possess a humanist essence and high culture, but, above all, its

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foundation should be decorum, which would be due to the profound knowledge of what dignity is and the struggle for it.

The republic he envisions and plans must not be artificial, but legitimate. This characteristic means, above all, that it must arise from the very heart of the nation, from its deepest and most original essence. In Martí's republic, national strength must be nurtured and employed to its fullest extent and in all its diversity; for this reason, and for the sake of this, he strongly recommends avoiding emigration and employing constructive critical thinking, always bearing in mind that one must build, even if it means destroying. This is why he insists on knowing the country well, because without knowing it well, it is impossible to govern it correctly.

It is his desire to build a homeland where the various sectors of the Cuban population, even those with opposing views and, indeed, antagonistic ones, can live in peace and sincerity. He is aware of how difficult it is to achieve his goal and therefore emphasizes that the aspiration to have a homeland where people live in freedom is not a fantasy, because he sees it as the indispensable condition for citizens to have the strength, courage, and intelligence to fight and die for their country. In this position, as Reyes (2021) points out, it is crucial that Martí conceives of freedom as inherent to human beings, even though it is part of nature.

Accordingly, he expresses his disagreement with positions that oppose the characteristics of the republic he seeks to establish, positions that incite fragmentation instead of unity, exclusion instead of inclusion; moreover, he argues that these positions are incapable of harnessing the contradictions that arise, all of which leads to a sterile society. For this reason, he repeatedly emphasizes, in various ways, the danger of creating an exclusionary republic that, instead of uniting all citizens, becomes consumed by internal conflicts.

He reiterated this warning in 1893, insisting that he did not want to escape one tyranny only to enter another, nor did he want a caste republic because "we love liberty, because in it we see the truth. We will die for true liberty; not for the liberty that serves as a pretext for keeping some men in excessive enjoyment and others in unnecessary suffering" (Martí, 1975b, p. 255); he wanted a republic with balance. This idea is present in several of his writings and in many ways; moreover, he linked it to the desire for his homeland to progress and become a place of work, where each of his children has the opportunity to prosper, because the progress of Cuba is the progress of every Cuban. Once again, Martí's unifying and inclusive vision shines through.

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Martí: education in connection with civic education

In José Martí's thought, there is a group of ideas related to civic education; this is his philosophy of education, based on his conception of the human being, characterized by its unified and integrative nature. This philosophy permeates and underpins his entire body of thought.

The unitary and integrative character is evident in the links he establishes between education and instruction. Both constitute a unity, which must be directed toward forming human beings capable of leading life. Thus, he maintains that each individual "must be prepared for life by education" (Martí, 2010d, p. 81) and emphasizes that in school one must learn what is necessary to forge a path toward the future and develop qualities such as love of work, sincerity, the continuous increase of knowledge, and decorum. He condemns those who live happily even when their lives are indecent, who are indifferent to the evils of the world; therefore, he rejoices that there are always those who "possess within themselves the decorum of many men. These are the ones who rebel with terrible force against those who steal the people's freedom, which is to steal men's decorum" (Martí, 1975i, p. 305). Think of the educational work so that it is carried out at all times and with lifelong benefits.

Martí's ideas about education show that he took into consideration the historical-social context and the role of national and Latin American tradition, evident in the purpose of founding an education that not only guaranteed the instruction process of individuals, but also their integral formation, where values such as social justice, solidarity and dignity stand out, understood in correspondence with the concrete historical conditions and not as schemes or dogmas.

This principle becomes crystal clear when he advises children to think about everything they see and to learn about everything, so they can be among the good, as he calls those who love wisdom, and he urges them to suffer for all those who cannot live honestly and to work so that everyone can live that way. For this reason, he considers those who fight to liberate peoples and defend a great truth to be heroes, those who suffer when they see the poverty and misfortune of others, and those who "fight for ambition, to enslave other peoples, to have more power, to take away another people's lands, are not heroes, but criminals" (Martí, 1975i, p. 308).

In José Martí's thought, profound theoretical elaboration and poetic nuances are combined; he thus grasps everything around him, and does so through the lens of humankind, later expressing it with a pluralistic discourse and inclusive language. All of this stems from a unified and integrative spirit, which fosters the integration of diverse dimensions in his ideas: ethics, politics, aesthetics, among

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others, all linked to human betterment. Culture and society are of great importance here, but so is nature, because he conceives of humankind as a sociocultural being who embodies nature and the entire universe, who is active, a maker of history and culture, and is conditioned by them.

Focused on these qualities, in Martí's thought, education springs from the integrated framework of culture and society, to which it then returns as a generative force and invigorating impulse through the work of humankind, where, simultaneously, all three—education, culture, and society—are united with nature transformed, re-transformed, and humanized. On this unified and integrative basis, one can understand why, for Martí, education and instruction are intertwined, why both have a formative role, and why formation transcends the academic and encompasses the human.

Based on the above reasoning, it's agreed with the authors Pacheco and Pupo (2017), who state that for Martí, the educational work is about "human formation in all spheres of individual and social development" (p. 6), since, it is worth emphasizing, his basic purpose was to form human beings, and not only to provide people with knowledge and norms that would be reflected in trades and professions.

However, his aim was not to mold just any kind of human being, but rather one bound to the homeland and its destiny. From Martí's ideas and reasoning, it can be inferred that his educational endeavors were intertwined with the republic to be built and the society that would be constructed around it, but also with culture. He conceived of culture in a broad, all-encompassing way, not merely as activity and its results, nor even when they bear the identifying mark of a people. For Martí, culture is all of this, but imbued with values that constitute impetus toward the ascent of humankind to higher levels, which he sees as linked to the degrees of freedom to be attained.

From the perspective of the interplay between society and culture, Martí combines education, instruction, and training, and these, integrated into a unified whole, come to encompass, from the ground up, science, and with it, art, religion, and philosophy. Thus, with integrationist aims and a unifying vocation, he paves the way for politics, legal systems, ethics, and morality, thereby creating a kind of framework that guides practical-transformative activity and, with it, other types of activity: cognitive, axiological, and communicative.

Given the richness and breadth of Martí's thought, the combination of education, instruction, and training becomes the best and most appropriate framework for achieving the goal of creating the human beings of the future, those who will live in, maintain, develop, and lead tomorrow's society.

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In Martí's sense, human formation means preparing individuals for life, which, more than a defining purpose, is a principle that gains strength from the conviction of human improvement and the value of virtue.

From Martí's reflections it is clear that the aforementioned mechanism, in order to become a pedagogical program of human formation, must be a flexible system, with coherent purposes that reveal what is desired, and, at the same time, that lacks coercion and dogmatism, that carries values specific to the historical time and corresponds to the culture and the transformations that are intended to be carried out in it, aimed at the future.

As can be understood from the preceding reflections, in Martí's thought, reason, intelligence, and knowledge are integrated with moral values and affectivity. This combination, through intersubjective communication, reaches practice and merges with it. This framework, present in his ideas since his youth, impels him to the transformation of society and, at the same time, of culture. This transformative character imbues his thought with a political dimension that leads him to aspire to the creation in his homeland of a republic that would be prosperous and possess a solid ethical and moral foundation.

In this framework, good and duty are not merely dictates of reason; their realization and projection must be embraced with satisfaction, pleasure, desire, passion, love, and a spirit of dedication. Therefore, they cannot be an end or a means extrinsic to human nature; they must stir and awaken sensitivity, which is simultaneously to find beauty and pleasure in the action or in duty fulfilled. This is a direct path for them to become conviction and, from there, to become a norm of action and a component of culture.

The ideal of what should be in society and culture, particularly in Cuba, so prevalent in the thought of José Martí, evident in his vision of an independent homeland—one he envisioned as prosperous and the most progressive known to date—was the fruit of advanced ideas, both anti-scholastic and liberating, from Cuban thinkers. Among them were José Agustín Caballero, Félix Varela, and José de la Luz y Caballero, as well as those of the European Enlightenment and, as Estévez (2021) explains, some representative authors of 19th-century Political Science, which he encountered through his constant reading of every text he could find. It is here that he established and consolidated the ideal of human development that crowned his ideas about the interplay of education, instruction, and formation, which would lead to the development of individuals capable of thought and action.

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It is not surprising that he affirms: "Freedom is the right that every man has to be honest, to think and to speak without hypocrisy" (Martí, 1975i, p. 304). It must be borne in mind at all times that Martí uses the category of man to refer to the human being in his entirety, a mode of expression that was common until recently. From his statement, one can grasp that the human being he aspired to for his homeland, the one who had to be educated, instructed, and formed, was in himself a citizen fit to live in the new homeland; that he himself, the citizen, would build daily and with the right to shape his thoughts and express them with sincerity, courage, and honesty. For him, honesty is linked to sincerity and the freedom to express what one thinks.

The citizen envisioned by Martí, and who must be formed inspired by his ideas, is more than an active participant in social affairs, because he plans it as a protagonist of society and a perpetual fighter for the well-being of the homeland, its independence, sovereignty, and for everything that leads to human improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

The conception of the human being is a basic element for civic education, since the scope and depth of such educational work depends on this conception.

One methodological value that can be drawn from Martí's thinking regarding civic education is that it should not be carried out in a fragmented way, and that it cannot be forgotten that for the citizen, the most valuable thing is the homeland and the human beings who constitute it.

The foundation of the relationship between José Martí's thought and civic education lies in its unified and integrative nature. Several arguments can be offered to support this assertion; among the most significant are the following:

- Martí conceives of the human being as a whole, integrating the multiplicity of existing relationships, as well as those whose future presence he could foresee. Based on this, his ideas about the citizen encompass not only the political and legal spheres, although both play a leading role in this case, because in Martí's ideas, the citizen must expand, through multiple connections, into society and culture in all its dimensions.
- The unified and integrative nature of Martí's thought dictates that his vision encompasses unity and complementarity between instruction, education, and human development; the latter must be the foundation upon which the former two converge. Thus, a formative principle

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takes shape: the formation of citizens must be, above all, human development, because the demands of the nation are not limited to the political and legal spheres.

- Another formative principle that emerges from Martí's thought is the combination of freedom, social justice, and human dignity, with the latter taking center stage. This is because it refers to the worth and shame of human beings, the esteem for one's own honor, and respect for other human beings simply by virtue of their humanity. These three principles, as a unified and integrative whole, must govern the republic and serve as a guide for forming the citizens who will inhabit it and elevate it to higher levels.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.



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